

WASHINGTON STAR

MAR 11 1964

INTERPRETIVE REPORT

# Missiles Measured in Lives

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A bright new weapon of the missile age—the Mobile Mid-range Ballistic Missile (MMRBM)—lies all but dead today.

Ostensibly it was the victim of a Congressional decision this week to authorize only \$40 million of the \$115 million needed to continue its development. Action on the defense appropriation was completed yesterday.

Actually, however, it was doomed earlier by its failure to pass the Pentagon's new kind of final examination for strategic war weapons—the test of lives saved during a war.

It could save only a few million.

The MMRBM once looked like it had almost everything going its favor: it filled a large and recognized "weapon gap"; Defense Secretary McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were

for it and two European supreme commanders, Gens. Lauris Norsted and Lyman Lemnitzer, said it was necessary for Europe's defense. It was considered ideally suited to the "damage-limiting" nuclear war strategy of the future.

## Exists Only on Paper

The MMRBM is a middle-sized missile, existing only on paper, of course, that would be wheeled around Europe and Far Eastern countries in a vehicle disguised as a commercial truck.

In time of war it would park at one of many pre-designated places, fire the missile and scoot.

The guidance system, called the "Stings" (stellar-inertial guidance system), would be the most accurate ever put into a missile. European commanders believe the MMRBM is necessary to destroy "hardened"

Russian missile sites even if it could do nothing else.

The MMRBM range would be up to 2,000 miles, thus filling the range gap of American missiles between the 400-mile Pershing and the 3,000-mile Polaris A-3.

The missile was viewed as one American solution to the problem of sharing control of nuclear weapons with the NATO allies. Other NATO countries showed little interest in it, however, particularly when Mr. McNamara said he expected them to pay.

The Air Force and the European commanders nevertheless wanted several hundred MMRBMs for an American weapon. But the missile flunked its final examination.

To rate the billions of dollars necessary for development, procurement and employment, any proposed strategic weapon today must be run through com-

puter war games to see how many lives it would save during a war.

## Two Situations Studied

Here are the results of two extreme situations studied in the MMRBM program:

A large nuclear attack on Europe in which the enemy tried to destroy both the cities and armed forces of NATO would take about 160 million European lives. If 400 to 600 MMRBMs were introduced into the war primarily to destroy Communist weapons before they could be used, deaths theoretically could be cut to 150 million.

Obviously this "saving" would make no difference in the outcome of the war or the fate of Europe.

In a "clean" attack—one in which the enemy tried only to destroy NATO forces and deliberately avoided city destruction—about 15 million Europeans would die. Give them the proposed large force of MMRBMs and deaths would still be 14 million.

Calculations like these have doomed numerous weapons—the Skybolt and the extra 750 Minuteman ICBMs requested last year by the Air Force, for example.

Such calculations may well doom the Nike-X anti-missile (which, calculations indicate, will save relatively few lives unless linked to a fall-out shelter system), the interceptor version of the A-11 mystery plane and the Air Force's proposed long-range low-level bomber, the "Ampss".

Modern strategic war is so destructive that only a few military systems such as ICBMs, some types of bombers, warning networks, and shelters can save significant numbers of lives, which is, of course, the basic purpose of all general-war weapons.

In the case of the MMRBM, it could save some lives at great cost, but those lives could be saved cheaper by adding a few ICBMs and tactical bombers.

This is why Mr. McNamara told Congress that although he wanted to continue to develop MMRBM components, the weapon had no clearly defined role in war.

Congress took that as an invitation to drop the program. The conferees cut the budget item to \$40 million. The \$40 million will be used to develop the "sting."